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One aspect of Project REDY (Rural Education-Disadvantaged Youth) was to identify elements of family living which were satisfying to residents of an economically depressed rural area in Southern Illinois. McVoy's Wants and Satisfaction scale was administered to 115 family heads to determine the degree to which certain wishes and interests of families residing in the area were satisfied. Four major areas of family living were examined: residence; consumer goods; family welfare; and social participation. It was found that there are aspects of rural life which are very satisfying to rural people, even to those who are severely disadvantaged; there are also certain aspects of rural life which are less satisfying. It was concluded that American society should accept the moral responsibility for improving the depressed rural areas rather than attempting to cast rural people into the mold of urban society. If rural area redevelopment is concerned with the psychological health of rural inhabitants, it should initially focus upon felt needs of the rural inhabitants. As the weaknesses of depressed rural area life are improved, families will readjust their major goal standards upward. A bibliography concludes this report. Related documents are RC 002 834 and RC 002 835. (SW)

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Development of Human Resources Through A Vocationally Oriented Educational Program For Disadvantaged Families in Depressed Rural Areas

Degree to Which Families Are Satisfied With Selected Aspects of Family Life in an Economically Depressed Rural Area

Gerald R. Fuller
Lloyd J. Phipps

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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September 1968

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PREFACE

This project, commonly referred to as Project REDY (Rural Education: Disadvantaged Youth), will result in the development of a vocationally oriented, family-centered educational program that can be used by educators to help severely disadvantaged families overcome the social and psychological pressures which inhibit their advancement in the affluent American society. The focus of the research is on making economically depressed rural areas a better place in which to live by developing the human resources within the areas. This is the third in a series of preliminary reports published to disseminate the findings of Project REDY.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Situation

Economists and sociologists have promoted the idea that people living in rural areas, particularly those people living in rural areas that are economically depressed, should be dissatisfied with many aspects of the way of life in the open-country areas of America. American society, with its inordinate focus on economics and economic growth, has had little patience with the economically disadvantaged rural areas of the nation and the people living in these deprived areas. The severely disadvantaged families residing in the poorer rural areas of this country have been consistently told that urban areas offer them great opportunity for improvement in family living. The focus of society, primarily due to economic pressures, has been on the development of urban areas. There has been a general disregard of the positive aspects of rural living and the contributions that economically depressed rural areas can make to the nation if given the attention deserved.

American society is suddenly realizing that the centralization of its economy and the subsequent centralization of its people into high population density areas is not the panacea that sociologists and economists had envisioned. The severely disadvantaged population of urban areas contains many families who did not wish to abandon their rural homes but were forced by American society to leave. Evidence indicates that a very large number of these families were more satisfied, or at least as satisfied, with the rural way of life than they now are with urban living. The recent turmoil in the big cities of America attests in part to the dissatisfaction rural migrant families have for life in high population density areas. Society must recognize that life in rural areas, including the economically depressed rural areas, does provide families with a great deal of satisfaction. The existing positive aspects of country life must be recognized and used as part of the foundation for rural area development.

Purpose of Research

One aspect of Project REDY was to identify some of the aspects of family living which were satisfying to the residents of an economically depressed rural area. This was accomplished by ascertaining the degree to which families felt that certain of their wishes and desires were being met. The degree of family satisfaction was assessed for both the total population of an economically depressed rural area in Illinois and for the severely disadvantaged families included in the total population.

Research Population

A rural, southern Illinois county identified as being economically depressed was the geographic area in which this phase of Project REDY was conducted. The total population of families in the area served as the population universe from which a random sample of families was drawn. Also, the families that were severely disadvantaged both socially and economically were identified within the total population universe and randomly sampled. The data reported in this publication is based upon the findings obtained from an on-site interview of family members in each of the random samples.

Trained interviewers contacted the male or female family head for each family in the random samples. During the interviews conducted in the spring

of 1966 at the residence of each family, the Wants and Satisfaction Scale was administered to the head of the family being interviewed.1/ The directions given the family member were so worded that the responses represented the general feeling of the adult family members regarding their wants and satisfaction related to selected aspects of family life.

Data regarding wants and satisfaction were collected for 84 families in the random sample which represented the cross-section of the 2,073 families identified as living in the study area. Similar data were also collected for 31 severely disadvantaged families from the random sample of 238 families identified as being severely disadvantaged both socially and economically who were residing in the study area.

1/Edgar C. McVoy, "A Method of Measuring the Satisfaction of Wants," Vol. 5, pp. 80-88, as reported in Delbert C. Miller, Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement, pp. 239-245.

II. MAJOR FINDINGS

McVoy's Wants and Satisfaction Scale was used to determine the degree to which the wishes and interests of families residing in an economically depressed rural area were being satisfied. Selected aspects of family living normally associated with American couples residing in rural areas, who identify themselves as being below the middle social class stratum, were examined.2/

The response to the questions contained in McVoy's Wants and Satisfaction Scale indicated whether the opportunity was available to a family for satisfying a particular wish or interest. A positive correlation exists between the degree to which the "wants" of a family were being met and the degree to which a family was "satisfied," according to McVoy.3/ The responses also indicated whether or not a family was satisfied with the quantity and with the quality of the item or experience which was described.

Degree of General Satisfaction with Selected Aspects of Family Life

A total score was calculated for each family being considered, based upon the responses to the items listed on the instrument. The total score was an indication of the degree to which each family felt the wishes and desires associated with the items listed on the Wants and Satisfaction Scale were being satisfied. A mean score was calculated for the random sample of all the families living in the economically depressed rural area studied. The mean score for the families was used as the basis for determining the standard deviation from the norm. The same mean score was used to determine the standard deviation from the norm for each of the families contained in a random sample of families who were severely disadvantaged both socially and economically.

A negative standard deviation must be interpreted as favorable. Due to the manner in which the scores were calculated, a negative standard deviation is associated with less deprivation. Therefore, a negative standard deviation indicates greater than average satisfaction while a positive standard deviation is related to less-than-average satisfaction when an individual family's score is compared to the mean score of the families in the random sample of the total population.

Families who had scores falling within the minus one standard deviation range can be characterized as tending to be slightly more satisfied than the average family in the rural area studied while those families with scores falling in the minus two standard deviation range can be considered as being considerably more satisfied than the average family.

Regarding positive standard deviations, those families having scores within the plus one range tend to be slightly less satisfied than the average family in the rural area being considered. The families having scores within the plus two standard deviation group tend to be considerably more dissatisfied than the average family.

2/McVoy, pp. 239-245.

3/McVoy, p. 240.

Total Population of Families

The findings indicate that 54 percent of the families with scores in the minus two and minus one standard deviation groups were satisfied with the degree to which their wants were being met. Of these families, the 15 percent with scores falling within the minus two standard deviation group were highly satisfied with the degree to which their wishes and interests were being met when compared to the average family. The 46 percent of the families having scores within the plus one and plus two standard deviation groups apparently lacked the opportunity to have their wishes and interests as adequately satisfied as the average family. Of these families, the 13 percent falling in the plus two standard deviation group were very dissatisfied when compared to a typical family.

Table 1--Percentage of Families Living in the Economically Depressed Rural Area and Degree of General Satisfaction, by Standard Deviation Group

Standard deviation*	Percentage of families
-2	15.476
-1	38.095
+1	33.333
+2	13.095

*Negative standard deviation is more satisfied than average.
Positive standard deviation is less satisfied than average.

Population of Severely Disadvantaged Families

The researchers were especially interested in determining the characteristics of those families most severely disadvantaged both socially and economically. The design of the research was such that the population of severely disadvantaged families residing in the study area could be identified and examined as a subgroup of the total population.

Table 2--Percentage of Severely Disadvantaged Families Living in the Economically Depressed Rural Area and Degree of General Satisfaction, by Standard Deviation Group

Standard deviation*	Percentage of families
-2	16.129
-1	22.581
+1	35.484
+2	25.800

*Negative standard deviation is more satisfied than average.
Positive standard deviation is less satisfied than average.

According to the findings, the manifest interests and wishes examined by the instrument were being less well satisfied for the sample of the severely disadvantaged "subculture" than for the population as a whole. However, not all the severely disadvantaged families felt seriously deprived of an opportunity to satisfy their wishes and interests. Just over 38 percent of the severely disadvantaged families felt satisfied, in general, with the opportunities available to them for fulfilling their wants when compared to the average family. Of the severely disadvantaged families, there were 16 percent who believed their wishes and interests were being very well satisfied.

Sixty-one percent of the severely disadvantaged families felt that their wishes and desires were not being met as well as would be the case of the typical family in the rural area studied. It was found that 35 percent of the deprived families were slightly less satisfied than the average family in the community. Nearly 26 percent of the severely disadvantaged families were found to be very dissatisfied when compared to the typical family; a ratio nearly twice that found in the total population of the studied area.

Degree of Satisfaction with Availability, Quantity, and Quality of Selected Aspects of Family Life

The 71 items included in the Wants and Satisfaction Scale were clustered by the researchers into four groupings which represented different areas of family living.* The four areas of family living were further divided into 17 major classifications associated with family life. The four major areas of family living and the subgroupings of items are as follows:

I. Residence

- A. House
- B. Yard
- C. Utilities
- D. Household facilities

II. Consumer goods

- A. Clothing
- B. Food
- C. Household furnishings
- D. Reading materials
- E. Transportation

III. Family welfare

*McVoy grouped the items in such a manner that 11 areas of family living were identified. The items were reorganized, based upon face validity, for the purpose of analyzing the findings as they related to Project REDY.

A. Health

B. Security

C. Insurance

D. Education

E. Recreation

F. Working conditions

IV. Social participation

A. Sense of belonging

B. Interpersonal relationships

Three weighted index scores were calculated for each of the four major areas of family living for both the sample of the total population and the sample of severely disadvantaged families. The indices indicated the degree to which the families felt satisfied with (1) the availability of opportunities to fulfill their wishes and interest, (2) the quantity of the specific items or experience they were able to possess or obtain, and (3) the quality of the items they were able to possess or experiences they were able to obtain. The indices will be referred to as "availability," "quantity," and "quality" in the remainder of this report.

The indices were computed so that a value of 1.000 would indicate all families tended to feel satisfied. Conversely, a feeling of dissatisfaction on the part of all families would yield an 0.000 index value.

Availability

The opportunities for families to satisfy their wishes and interests regarding the areas of family living studied existed to a very great extent in the economically depressed rural areas. According to the data in Graph 1, both the sample of the population as a whole and the sample of severely disadvantaged families felt living in the economically depressed rural area did not seriously deprive them of opportunities to satisfy their wants. However, the severely disadvantaged families sampled indicated they had slightly less opportunity to satisfy their wishes than did the total population sample.

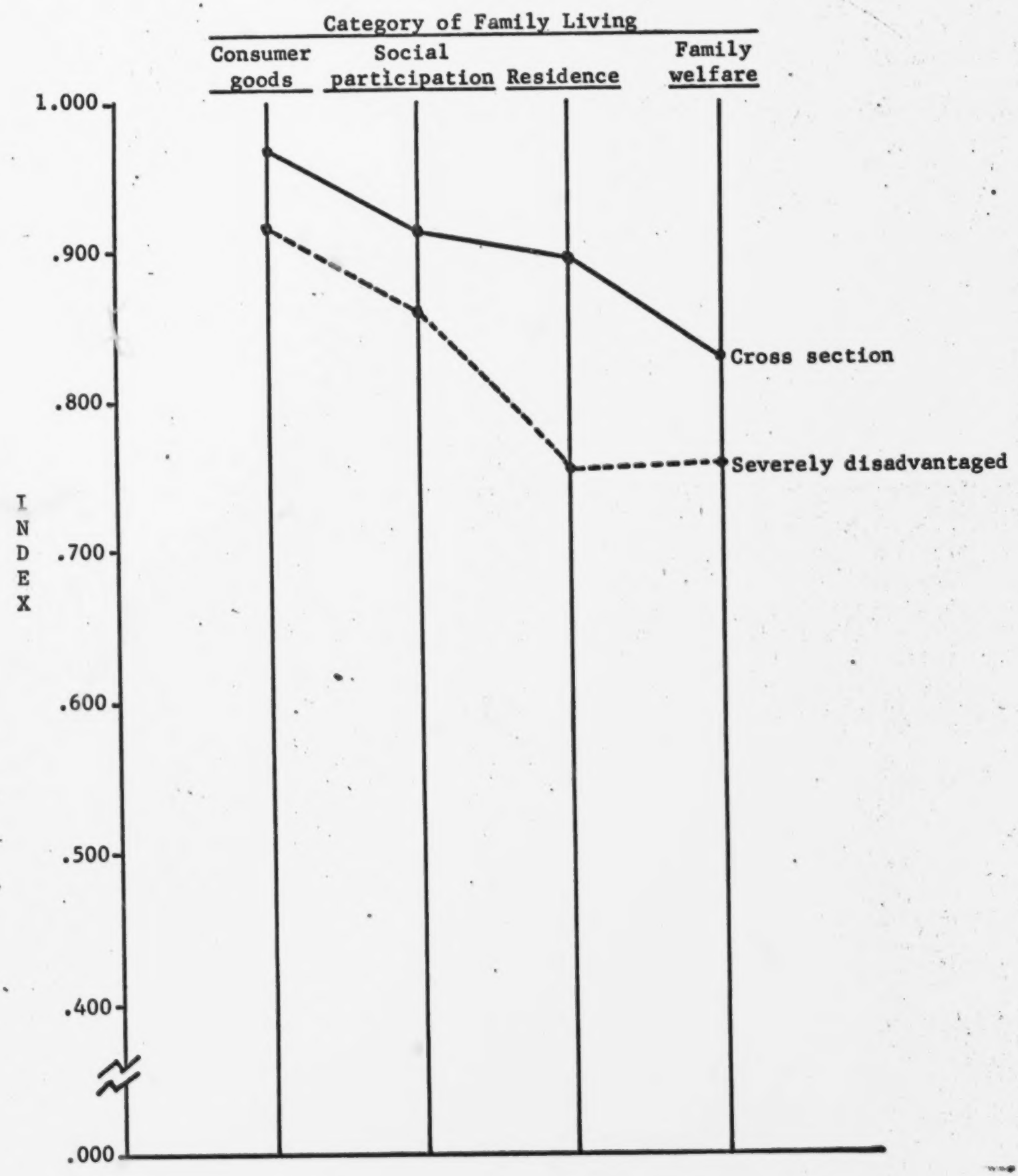
Opportunities to satisfy family wants regarding consumer goods were rated highest by both groups of families. The availability of opportunities to satisfy wants related to a family residence was rated third by the families in the total population sample and lowest by the families in the sample of the severely disadvantaged population. Opportunities to satisfy desires related to family welfare were ranked low by both groups of families. The greatest difference between the indices calculated for each group of families occurred in the category labeled residence.

Quantity

The families sampled in the economically depressed rural area were relatively well satisfied with the quantity of the items they possessed or

GRAPH 1

INDEX OF AVAILABILITY OF OPPORTUNITIES TO FAMILIES FOR SATISFYING SELECTED WISHES AND INTERESTS



experiences they were able to obtain, as indicated in Graph 2. The sample of severely disadvantaged families again tended to feel slightly less satisfied than did the sample of the population as a whole. However, the severely disadvantaged families sampled indicated slightly more satisfaction regarding family welfare than did the total population group. Both groups of families were most satisfied with the quantity of consumer goods which they possessed. The sample of the total population ranked the quantity of items related to the category of residence as second, while the severely disadvantaged families sampled considered this category as being lowest in rank. The severely disadvantaged families studied placed family welfare as second in rank but the families in the total population sample placed this lowest of all categories. The quantity of experiences related to social participation was placed third in the ranking by both groups of families. Again, the largest difference in indices occurred in the residence category.

Quality

The families studied in the economically depressed rural area were relatively well satisfied with the quality of the items they possessed or experiences they were able to obtain related to the areas of family living studied, as reported in Graph 3. The severely disadvantaged families in the sample tended to be less satisfied than the total population sample of families in terms of quality of items or experiences. The families in the total population sample rated the quality of family welfare highest, with the quality of social participation a very close second. The group of severely disadvantaged families ranked the quality of social participation first and family welfare a not-so-close second. The quality of consumer goods was rated third and the quality of residence fourth by both groups of families. The categories of residence and family welfare showed the greatest differences in indices between the total population sample and the sample of severely disadvantaged families.

Summary

It can be ascertained from the data that life in the economically depressed rural area best satisfied the wishes and interests of the total population sample of families in the following categories of family living:

1. Availability of opportunities to satisfy wants regarding goods and social participation.

2. Quantity of items possessed relating to consumer goods and a residence.

3. Quality of family welfare and social participation.

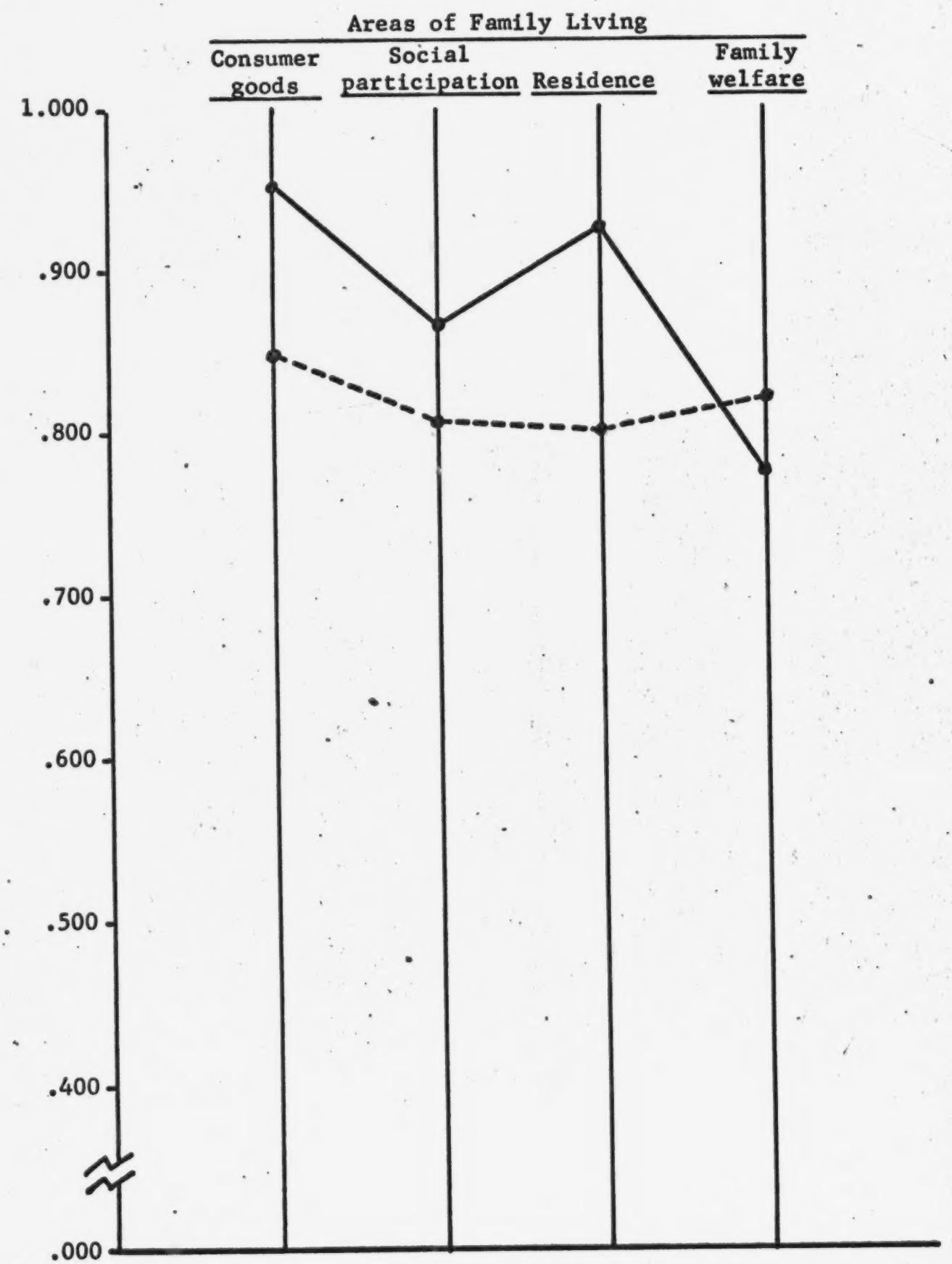
Life in the deprived rural area was least satisfying to the families as a whole in terms of:

1. Availability of opportunities to satisfy wants related to residence and family welfare.

2. Quantity of experiences obtained regarding social participation and family welfare.

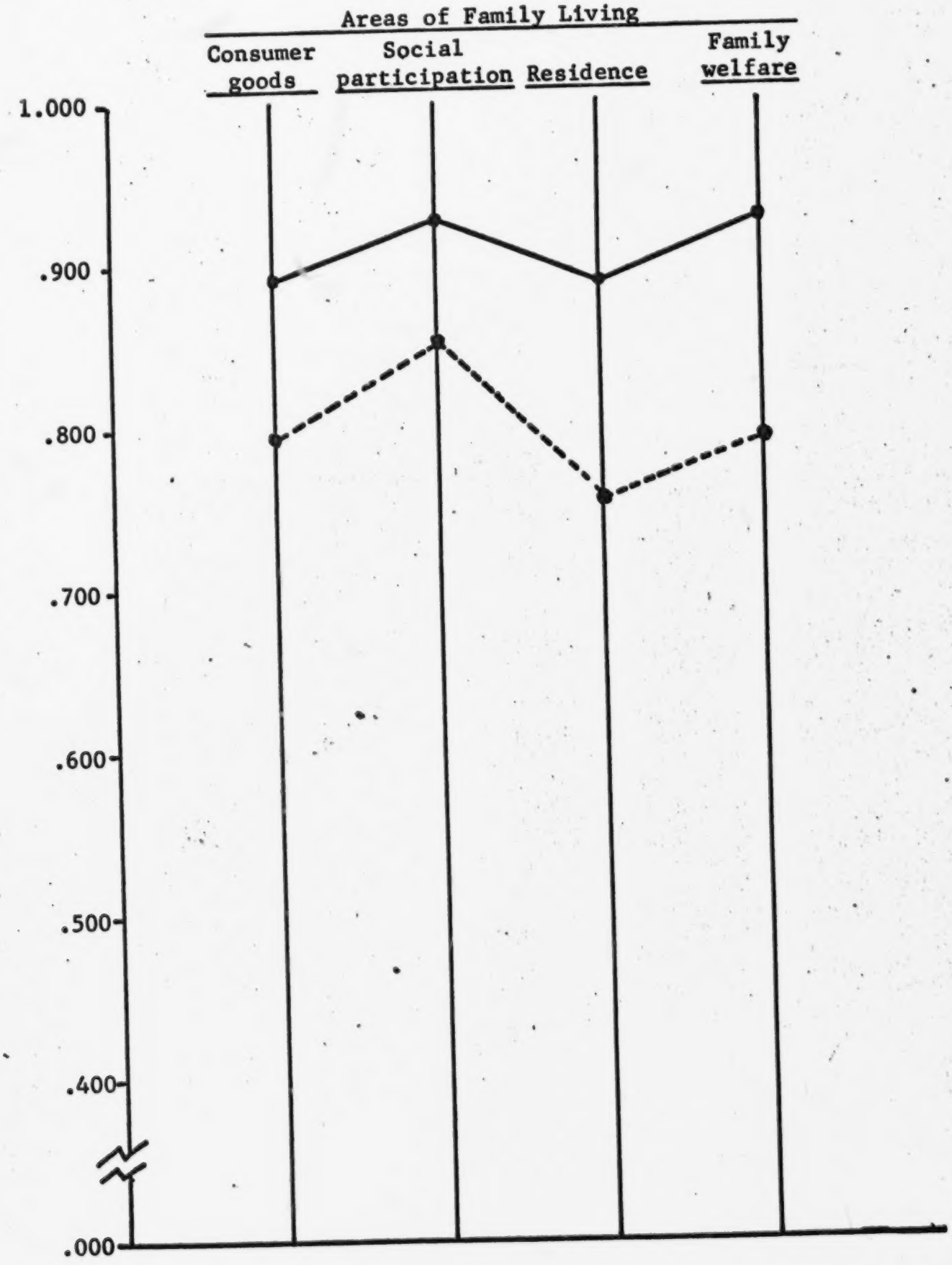
GRAPH 2

INDEX OF QUANTITY OF ITEMS OR EXPERIENCES POSSESSED OR OBTAINED BY FAMILIES IN SELECTED AREAS OF FAMILY LIVING



GRAPH 3

INDEX OF QUALITY OF ITEMS OR EXPERIENCES POSSESSED OR OBTAINED BY FAMILIES IN SELECTED AREAS OF FAMILY LIVING



3. Quality of items related to consumer goods and a residence.

Similarly, a study of the data for the severely disadvantaged population of families reveals that they were most satisfied with the following categories of family living:

1. Availability of opportunities to possess consumer goods and to participate in social activities.

2. Quantity of consumer goods possessed and family welfare.

3. Quality of family welfare and social participation.

The severely disadvantaged families were least satisfied with the:

1. Availability of opportunities to satisfy their wishes regarding a residence and family welfare.

2. Quantity of items possessed related to a residence and amount of social participation.

3. Quality of items associated with both a residence and consumer goods.

III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Sociologists and economists constantly compare life in economically depressed rural areas of America with life in the more affluent, middle-class, urban areas. Little attention has been given to ascertaining the positive aspects of life afforded to those people living in the depressed rural areas. The literature seems to focus upon the differences between affluent urban living and less affluent rural living. The differences are generally given negative connotations and rural families are classified as the disadvantaged.

There are aspects of rural life which are very satisfying to rural people, even to those who are severely disadvantaged. Likewise, there are certain aspects of rural life which are less satisfying. It would seem that American society should accept the moral responsibility for improving the depressed rural areas so the people living in rural America can gain more satisfaction from those things which they value most, rather than attempting to cast rural people into the mold of urban society.

Satisfaction

The data collected in Project REDY indicate that there are certain aspects of family living which families in economically depressed rural areas feel are being well satisfied. Also, certain categories of family living with which families were less satisfied were identified. Indications of the value placed by families in an economically depressed rural area upon selected aspects of family life would be implicit in these data. These data provide insight regarding the strength of depressed rural areas which can be capitalized upon and the weaknesses which must be improved.

Life in the economically depressed rural area studied was relatively satisfying to the vast majority of families who lived there at the time the research was conducted. The data revealed that approximately 1,800 of the 2,073 families in the area studied considered themselves as not being greatly dissatisfied with family life in the depressed rural area, when the findings were projected. Interestingly, when the population of severely disadvantaged families was examined as a separate group, 74 percent felt that they were not greatly dissatisfied with living in the depressed rural area.

It was evident that families living in the economically depressed rural area had a somewhat different pattern of family living than the affluent American, middle-class, urban family. Yet for the most part, the rural families were relatively satisfied with the degree to which their wishes and interests were being met. As suggested by Dunkelburger, the male household heads may be deeply aware that other people live better than they. At the same time, they may have a realistic concept of the world about them. They seem to recognize the situation about them and adjust their wishes and interests to be consistent with realistic prospects of achievement. Their goals are sometimes relatively low but realistic and desired with considerable intensity.4/

Also, there is some evidence that the contemporary economic measures of poverty which are prevalent in today's society may yield somewhat erroneous results when applied to the culture of rural America. The data tend to support Jack E. Weller's conclusions that many of the residents of economically depressed rural areas have low aspirations for economic success and derive their primary satisfaction from noneconomic aspects of family living. He characterized these

4/John E. Dunkelburger, "Intensity of Job Mobility Aspiration Among Household Heads in Low Income Areas of the Rural South," p. 82, as reported in Walter L. Slocum's, Aspirations and Expectations of the Rural Poor--A Guide to Research, p. 24.

families as being familistic and person-oriented rather than thing-oriented.5/ Not all rural people who are judged by society as living in economic poverty consider themselves as disadvantaged.

The strongest positive aspects of living in an economically depressed rural area are, if one is willing to generalize the findings of this research, (1) the availability of opportunities for families to satisfy their wishes and interests regarding the welfare of the family and a residence for the family, (2) the amount of social participatory activities in which the family as a group and individual family members are able to participate, and (3) the quality of the social participation and the quality of the well being of the family unit and its members.

The aspects of family life in an economically depressed rural area with which families are less satisfied, when compared with the previously mentioned aspects, appear to be the (1) availability of opportunities to satisfy wishes and desires related to the welfare of the family and a family residence, (2) quantity of activities involving social participation, and (3) quality of consumer goods and residences.

The total population of families in a depressed rural area is not as well satisfied with the quality of services and activities regarding family welfare as are the severely disadvantaged families. Another difference between the population of families as a whole and the severely disadvantaged families as a group relates to satisfaction associated with residences. The population of families as a whole is relatively well satisfied with the quality of items associated with a family residence but the severely disadvantaged families are not.

Values

It would appear that the responses obtained from families in the economically depressed rural area studied were influenced by both the recognition of the prospects for having wishes and interests satisfied and the placement of relatively high values upon things other than those commonly associated with the American society; characterized by Riesman as being consumption-oriented and other directed.6/

People tend to be most satisfied when the wishes and interests they value most highly are being well met. Therefore, an insight into the value system of a group of satisfied families could be obtained by determining which of their wishes and interests were being best satisfied and which were being least satisfied.

In this study, some 1,800 of the 2,073 families studied were not dissatisfied with the degree to which their wishes and interests were being met, as measured by the Wants and Satisfaction Scale. In effect, in the minds of the families the categories of family living ranked highest probably compensate for the shortcomings of those ranked lower. Projecting the date, the population of an economically depressed rural area when examined as a whole would seem to have a value hierarchy from highest to lowest, as follows:

5/Jack E. Weller, "Is There a Future for Yesterday's People?" Excerpts from "Yesterday's People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia," Saturday Review, 48:33-6.

6/David Riesman et al., The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing Character, pp. 148-149.

1. Availability of opportunities to satisfy wants related to consumer goods.
2. Quantity of consumer goods which they possessed.
3. Quantity of items which they possess related to a residence.
4. Quality of activities related to social participation.
5. Quality of family welfare they possessed.
6. Availability of opportunities to satisfy wants regarding social participation.
7. Availability of opportunities to satisfy wants regarding a residence.
8. Quality of consumer goods which they possessed.
9. Quality of items they possessed associated with a residence.
10. Quantity of social participation.
11. Availability of opportunities to satisfy wants regarding family welfare.
12. Quantity of items they possessed related to family welfare.

Examination of the data for the severely disadvantaged families revealed the somewhat different value hierarchy listed below, from highest to lowest:

1. Availability of opportunities to satisfy wants regarding consumer goods.
2. Quality of family welfare possessed.
3. Availability of opportunities to satisfy wants regarding social participation.
4. Quantity of consumer goods they possessed.
5. Quality of social participation activities.
6. Quantity of family welfare they possessed.
7. Quantity of social participation.
8. Quantity of items they possessed related to a residence.
9. Quality of consumer goods which they possessed.
10. Quality of items they possessed related to a residence.
11. Availability of items to satisfy wants related to a residence.
12. Availability of opportunities to satisfy wants related to family welfare.

Generalizing from the findings of this research, it can be said that the families living in an economically depressed rural area tend to value "thing" oriented aspects of family living slightly more than the "people" oriented aspects. They place a little higher value on consumer goods than on residences. Also, they tend to value slightly more the aspects of social participation as compared to family welfare.

It can be said that severely disadvantaged families residing in rural areas tend to place a higher value than the total population on "people" oriented aspects of family living as compared to the "thing" oriented aspects, if one is willing to generalize from the findings of this research. These families value social participation and family welfare. Within the "thing" oriented aspects of family living, the disadvantaged families tend to place a greater value on consumer goods than they do on residences.

IV. IMPLICATIONS

Families residing in economically depressed rural areas are for the most part, satisfied with their way of life. The vast majority of families residing in economically depressed rural areas are not ready to support major alterations in their way of life to the degree that satisfaction or dissatisfaction is related to motivation for change. These families would prefer, if society would provide them with the opportunity, to remain in the depressed rural area and the families are willing to accept the fact that they are, when compared with more affluent urban and rural areas, living in a disadvantaged situation. What these families seem to want most is the opportunity to remain in the region where they presently reside and for society to help them by providing the resources necessary to develop the depressed areas into more viable places in which to live.

It would appear that the families living in the depressed rural areas have adjusted their value system so that they are able to gain the greatest satisfaction from family life from those things which are most available to them in the disadvantaged areas. They are realistic about life at the level available to them in the depressed country area. Realistically, they must recognize the shortcomings of their relatively disadvantaged situation and wish to improve all aspects of family life. However, they have an apparent hierarchy of the aspects of family living examined in this study in which they identify certain items or experiences as needing greater attention than others.

Rural area redevelopment, if it is concerned with the psychological health of rural inhabitants, should initially focus upon the felt needs of those inhabitants. As the weaknesses of depressed rural area life are improved, the families will readjust their major goal standards upward. The families will recognize the success achieved in making deprived rural areas better places in which to live. The families will be stimulated to continue to strive for improvement. Society has offered families in depressed rural areas little chance for success of this type in the past.

Recognizing that the major value system of the families in the economically depressed rural area tends to be slightly more oriented towards "things" than toward "people," the initial attention of rural area developers should focus upon providing more opportunities for families to satisfy their wishes and interests related to their house, yard, utilities and household facilities. Also, attention needs to be focused upon helping families improve the quality of clothing, food, household furnishings, reading materials, and transportation.

The fact that the severely disadvantaged families living within the total population of the depressed rural area have a slightly different value orientation must not be overlooked by rural area developers. The primary thrust of activities focused on the disadvantaged families should center around the "people" oriented aspects of family living. Rural area developers must provide more opportunities for severely depressed families to satisfy their wishes regarding medical services, family security, insurance and savings, education, recreation and working conditions. Also, ways and means will need to be developed whereby the disadvantaged families will be involved in a greater number of social activities to help them develop a sense of belonging in the community and to aid them in obtaining more personal contacts with others.

The deep-seated wishes and interests of people do not change greatly over a short time. Sudden changes in family living patterns forced upon rural

people, such as migration to an urban area, may be in total more frustrating than rewarding to the people involved. The people living in depressed rural areas have been at the mercy of a materialistic oriented society and, in order to survive, have been told they must give up many of the aspects of life they value most. American society has offered them few alternatives to date. Even so, large numbers of Americans choose to remain in the economically depressed rural areas regardless of their comparative disadvantaged situation, according to Roy.7/

Economically depressed rural areas can be developed into more viable places in which to live. The existing positive aspects of rural life can be maintained and improved. By attacking those problems which families living in rural areas feel are detrimental to satisfying their wishes and interests, effective and positive changes can be made. As the present wishes and interests of rural people are better satisfied, these people will be ready to adjust realistically their desires upward. They will feel they are not being forced by society to sacrifice what they value most in order to exist in American society. Economically depressed rural areas will grow into more viable places in which to live and the way of life for those who live there will be improved.

7/Prodipto Roy, "Factors Related to Learning Farming," Journal of Farm Economics, p. 674.

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